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Signet FALL 1970

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CONTENTS

FICTION

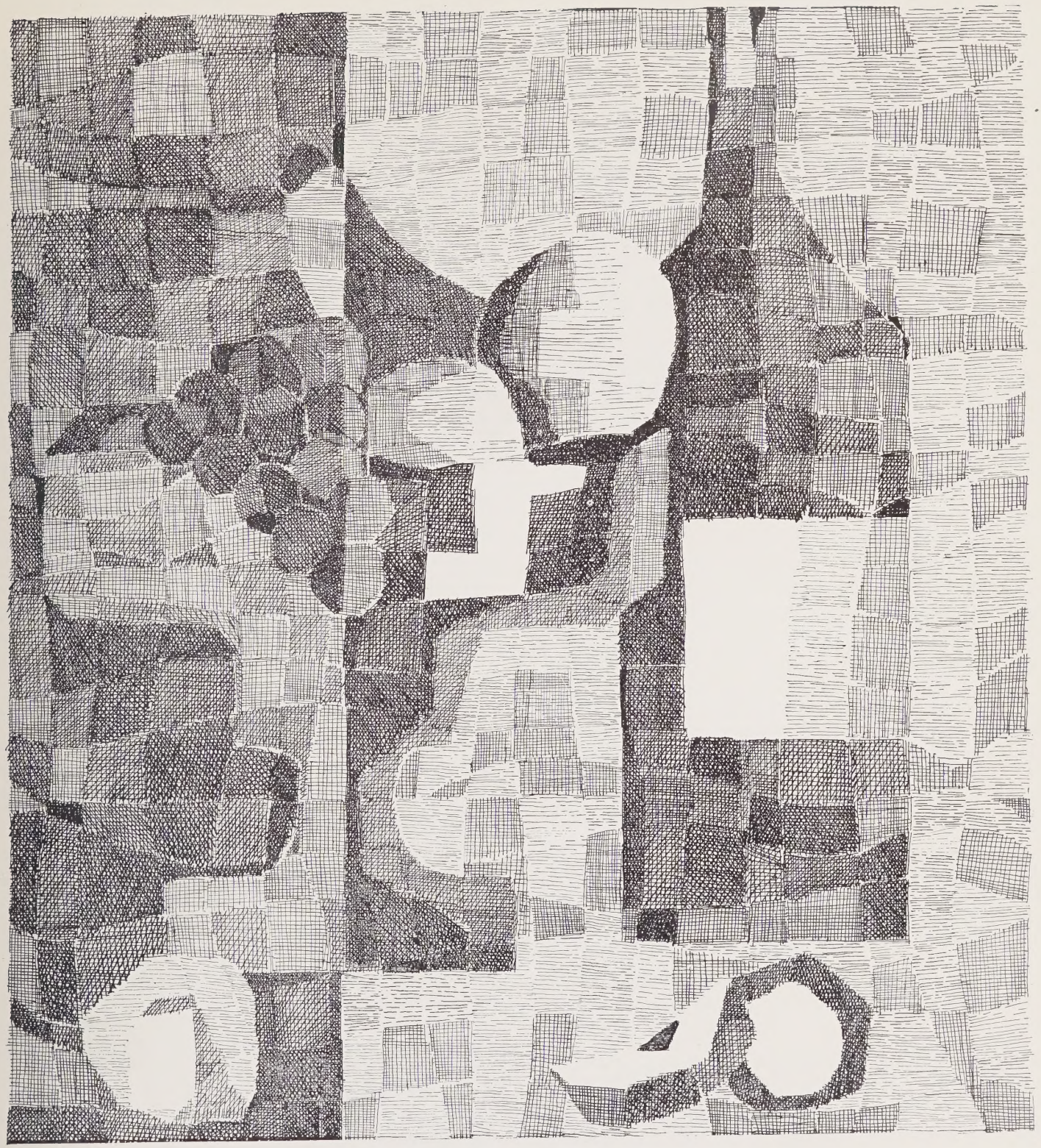
A Family Affair/*Cathy Henson*/5
J. S./*Gayle Adcock*/12
The Buck/*Gayle Adcock*/14
Petey and Ike/*Sara McNamee*/22
The Apostles' Creed/*Julie Ferrill*/32
That's My Girl /*Linda Hudson*/39

POETRY

Time?/*Reedie Floyd*/8
Wolves/*Vladimir Soloukhin*/10
Eulogy for the Sixties/*Mary Rodgers Quinlon*/11
Two Poems/*Linda Hudson*/15
Palmistry/*Ted Weiant*/17
Can't We Be Friends Anymore?/*Pat Tovey*/18
The Bar/*Bobbie Calhoun*/19
How to Drink the Sun/*Valdimir Soloukhin*/21
Christ Church Park/*Paul Baker Newman*/24
Three Poems/*Linda Hudson*/26
Appalachia/*Kathy Fetter*/28
Poem/*Segar Gravatt*/29
Images/*Reedie Floyd*/31
April 23, 1970/*Retta D'Albora*/35
Poem/*Deb Williams*/35
Poem/*Segar Gravatt*/37

ART

Cover/*Azu Ocampos*
Inside Cover/*Azu Ocampos*
Pen and Ink/*Pat Holton*/3
Pen and Ink/*Terry McGehee*/9
Pen and Ink/*Sheryl Altman*/13
Photograph/*Ted Weiant*/16
Collage/*Sue Groover*/20
Pen and Ink/*Azu Ocampos*/25
Watercolor/*Sue Groover*/30
Pen and Ink/*Sue Groover*/34
Pen and Ink/*Sheryl Altman*/36
Pen and Ink/*Ann Wesson*/38



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CATHY HENSON

A FAMILY AFFAIR

They are all quiet and uneasy, for they have nearly reached the church. The father squints and sits forward almost hugging the steering wheel, and he shakes his head from window to window. He has never been here before, and is trying to follow the two sets of directions being voiced in the car. The trembling grandmother drools from time to time as she excitedly guides her son-in-law. She says she hasn't been in the town since *he* was minister—God rest his soul, but she's sure they should turn right at the recreation center. The mother raises her voice to disagree with the grandmother, her own mother. She keeps jerking her body around to face the back seat.

"Don't you remember, Mother? After the new street was cut through, Daddy used to go on past the 'rec' center to the sweet shop two blocks down. *Then* he'd turn right, and we'd come out at the far end of the church parking lot."

The children, one on each side of Gram, look down at empty hands in their laps, flip them over a couple of times, and then look out the window again. The girl is thirteen. She jiggles one of her crossed legs anxiously and looks down at her feet. She is thinking of the fat girl with pimples in her history class who died almost four months ago and now James Duer, the new boy from up North, sits in her seat; but she is also glad of another chance to wear the new black patent leather heels and nylon stockings with the flowered garter belt her mother has just recently allowed. Blotting her lips deliberately, she wonders if she should cry at some time during the service. She thinks it might show the family what a young woman she's become and create for her more privileges than Ben. Still young, her brother doesn't know what to say or do. He has never been to a funeral before. He is waiting for a cue from someone. All he knows is not to laugh at anything, no matter what.

The grandmother's brother-in-law, the mother's uncle, and the children's great-uncle is dead. He has been the minister of the First Baptist Church for forty-six years. The children, Sharon and Ben, remember their Uncle Rube as a jolly and loud man, not at all like Reverend Currie of their church at home. They remember Rube as a tall man and straight, with pure white hair, who always talked about hunting and fishing. As far as Ben remembers, Uncle Rube never said the word "Jesus" to him, and he didn't always ask him how he liked Sunday school, and was he remembering to put in his tithe each Sunday, and especially did he notice what-a-glorious-day-God-had-made-today, like Rev. Currie does at First Presbyterian. Punching her husband, Mrs. Edmunds says Rube was definitely her favorite uncle, and Mr. Edmunds adds, "Yes, he was a good man." The grandmother, who seems brave to her grandchildren, chuckles to recall how she and Grand'y used to bring the children's mother and her brothers to visit here every Christmas.

"Children, I can remember—and your mother can, too—how we'd all be eating dinner in Rube's and Margaret's house, and we'd all have to hop up and help clear the table real quick, so Rube could marry somebody right there in the dining room not ten minutes later! That was a sight! Remember it, Sister?"

Her daughter laughs, too, but shakes her head slowly, and her mouth ends up in a strained half-smile, so Ben knows she is sad.

"We're supposed to meet in the church's education building—it's across the street from the old church—and then walk into the church together. Isn't that right, Mother?" she asks. Gram nods that yes, that's what her sister Evelyn told her when she called last night, that they'd all (the immediate family) go in a body across the street when it was almost time for the funeral service to begin. Ben tenses with the nearness of it.

The mother has been right about the new street. Their car pulls up beside others in the parking lot in front of the flat building. The mother is talking. She makes

them listen to her. She says there used to be, right out here where this education building is, a huge hotel, the Pinkerton. And this hotel had cannons in front. She used to climb on them, she says, with her brothers—his uncles, and her cousins—Rube's children.

"Look here, children. You wouldn't believe it: on holidays when we'd be here, we'd get to help fire them off," she brags. "We were a wild bunch—that's me, your Uncles Louie, Tom and Ned, and your cousins—Charlie, Tina, Betty, and Allan."

He dosen't understand. "But they're big," Ben argues. "They're parents, and they have kids."

"They used to be little," she answers with a sigh. "I did, too, believe it or not." She says this like some actress would in a particularly emotional moment, and Gram laughs like a wheeze.

"They gave us a time," she agrees.

Smiling politely, Ben and Sharon look out at the building.

People with hats on are going inside. They seem to act different from usual. Men cup their hands under ladies' elbows, and teenagers link their arms through their grandmothers' crooked ones. Everyone's heads are bent down, as if they are searching the ground for something that has dropped. And all the faces wear tight smiles. Ben and Sharon forget and scramble out of the car quickly. Then they have to stand stupidly, shifting their weights from one foot to the other and pretending to brush their clothes off, waiting for their parents and grandmother to precede them inside.

The education building is named after him—the Rupert Valentine Hodson Memorial Building, and a portrait of him and his wife hangs in the lobby of the building. The immediate family is clustered in this lobby now: the women of the church have dished up a pre-funeral dinner for about seventy of them. Relatives are finding each other and exclaiming; the last reunion was a whole year ago when Uncle Louie's daughter, Anne, got married.

Ben is glad his sister takes him with her to find the cousins their same ages. He knows his mother would like to pull him with her to speak to Great-Aunt Margaret, and he is afraid he might forget and stare at her too much. Ben is surprised that most of the big family are smiling and laughing. He's embarrassed that Uncle Rube's painted face is seeing them all so happy. Uncle Ned is even telling jokes, and the cousins giggle wildly. Aunt Nancy, as usual, has captivated a circle of stubby women with amazing stories of her latest aches and pains. But he notices that his father is slumping against the wall, like he doesn't belong. Suddenly Ben feels sorry for his own father. He thinks he would hate having to say to all the old people, "I'm Joe Edmunds—married Charlotte Brandt's daughter, Martha? Mrs. Brandt is Mrs. Hodson's sister." And Ben wishes he could walk up to his mother's husband, grab his hand, and pull him into the circle of loud cousins where the father, too, could feel easy. As far as Ben can see, everyone is acting just the same as they did at his cousin Anne's wedding. He stands without speaking, locking and unlocking his knee joint and popping his knuckles behind his back, nervously scrutinizing such an unconcerned mob.

It's time to eat. Flushed and with heads bobbing, six women dab plump hands on their aprons and motion for the folks to line up in the hall from the lobby to the church dining room. Of course, the big ones let the children go first. Ben is used to having his mother place his choices on her tray when they tackle a buffet line, but this time he follows close behind his cousin Tad, a year older than Ben, and balances his own tray.

It is dizzying to look at such a spread: greenish chunks of watermellon pickles smell loudly, the tossed salad droops, and slick jello molds shimmer; the other deviled egg halves slide around on the china plate when he removes one; greasy fried chicken parts, cold slabs of roast beef and pink ham, bologna circles and liver pudding squares come next. Then he passes quickly over the colors—bean and onion casseroles, squash dishes, creamy cauliflower, and bright orange buttons of honey buttery carrots—to the golden macaroni and cheese, where he stops to fill the last section of his cardboard plate. He dumps a gooey piece of chocolate cake on top of his macaroni and follows Tad to the tables.

The cousins sit together, and as Ben and Tad jerk squeaky chairs out, the others are hushed. All their eyes point to seventeen-year-old Mark, the oldest and most imitated cousin, for he has stopped eating and is talking reverently with his mouth and hands and eyes and head. Ben sits down his plate and slips into his chair, listening.

". . . it was bad," Mark is saying. "P. Y. was riding his motorcycle real late one night and he ran into a chain across the road, and it broke his neck. All us guys went to the funeral 'cause we're in the same club, and they had an open coffin. We all went up and looked in, but I swear I wish I hadn't of. His neck was all sorta blue, and you could see where they'd worked it back into place under his tie—it was kinda twisted and lumpy. But that's how I see him now, and it's how I'll always remember him. And I wish I didn't," Mark finishes, and picks up his plastic fork.

Ben wrinkles his forehead. He's not real sure what Mark is talking about, but he's still amazed at the relatives. He has not even smiled yet, but the cousins are shooting food out of their spoons across the table, and the aunts and uncles, and even some of the grandparents

are also acting no different than they would at any other dinner—openly enjoying the food, as if no one had died. But when the relatives thank the cooks, marveling at the short notice they have had to feed such a brood, these women get water in their bottom eyelids, and they mumble things like: after all he did for them, it's the least they can do for his family. And the relatives start getting more thoughtful, Ben observes.

When they are through, the cousins hang around outside the Hodson Building with their hands thrust in their pockets, blowing the chilled air cloudy from their mouths, watching the people going into the church across the street. Soon the grownups emerge and regroup their own families to begin the street crossing. Ben's father smiles widely at him, but he can't return the smile. Then the father drops behind Ben and Sharon, the grandmother and the mother, who take their places behind Uncle Louie and Aunt Dot. In a silent line, the immediate family moves across the street and breaks through the crowd of men smoking in the front yard of the church. In single file, the relatives are herded down the right aisle of the crowded church to the front of the sanctuary, each one followed by pews full of eyes. Ben pauses at the first empty pew he sees and looks to his parents for approval, but Gram gives him a push and mutters something about taking a look.

Past the rows of reserved pews the immediate family waits in a line to view Uncle Rube in the open silver coffin. Ben is horrified that he'll see a dead man, but his parents nod behind him. From his position now, he can see Rube's nose—a white, straight nose poking above the lid.

Suddenly, Sharon takes his hand, and Ben thinks she might be scared, too. Uncle Tom and little Ellen are leaving the flower-piled box, and Ben sees that their faces aren't changed. Then Betty and her daughter, Catherine come away. Catherine is sobbing, and Betty holds her up. Ben is shaking: after Uncle Louie, it will be his and Sharon's turn. Aunt Dot peeks, and then Louie. It is time for Ben.

He looks up first and sees the choir's red faces focused on him. He stands on his tip-toes and hears his mother hissing, "Help him, Joe!" His father's wide, sure hands clamp around his waist and lift Ben about two feet off the ground. There he is. Great-Uncle Rube is lying there dead, lying there dead in a dark suit and his glasses. The coat has a flower in it. Ben's father lets him drop after a second, and he wanders up the left aisle, dazed. Things flash in his mind—the washed out face, flat hands stacked on the stomach, pearly eyelids, pinked lips, and the serene expression.

Mechanically, Ben sits next to Sharon, who pats him on the knee, and then he is alert. Ben surveys the congregation wet-faced and choking, crammed into the pews and into extra folding chairs in the aisles, and he watches his relatives pass the coffin. When all are seated, a young minister with a crew cut and glasses steps to the pulpit. He leads the people in eight verses of a Baptist hymn about Calvary and seeing the Saviour and His blood. Ben sees a weeping soprano drop out of the singing to blow her nose. Then he listens to the preacher yell about having seen Rube fishing out on the Pinkerton Lake last year and what an active man he was. Then Ben doesn't listen.

He leans his head on Sharon's shoulder and closes his eyes. He is thinking of old Rube getting to see God and Jesus in Heaven. He knows Rube will go to Heaven, because he was a minister. He wishes Rube could tell him about what it is like. Ben sees angels and God and His Son sitting all together on clouds. He sees blood, too, on Jesus' hands. Sharon punches him, and Ben stares at the six men carrying the box out—closed up now. People are crying louder, and Ben thinks it is sad. Stumbling, he follows his grandmother outside.

They pile into cars and two black hearses and snake out to the cemetery in a long caravan. Shut in the car, the father is saying something about a damned Masonic burial service, and the mother clears her throat loudly and gazes out her side window. All the houses they pass are small—not like at home, and mostly wood. The minister's house—the one where Rube and his family used to live and where the new young minister lives alone now—is about the only brick one in Pinkerton. The houses look like rows of identical little white boxes, all set the same distance from the curb. There is a wooden love swing on every porch, and storm doors with fancy silver initials stare back from each front entrance.

The grandmother points to a mansion on top of a hill they pass in leaving town. "Old Man Pinkerton built his house on top of that mountain when he started this town. You know, the town just grew up around his mill. Most of the people here work in the Pinkerton Mill. He was rich, and he set his house up to overlook his Mill," Gram says.

"Sharon, your cousin Tina and I used to think that house was the biggest house in the world," the mother laughs. "Man, it doesn't look half so big anymore."

They pass between the neat factory with its chimneys and the stilted railroad tracks on the opposite side of the road. Lumps of coal are piled into heaps along the street by trains which have spilled their loads for the clothing mill. A mucky creek runs alongside the trestle, and Ben watches it follow them out to the very edge of the town. Here the caravan slows down, and each car bumps cautiously over the built-up asphalt at the huge cemetery gates.

On the one curling grey road at the cemetery, the cars creep through the smooth, green grass with plastic poinsettias and stones growing out. Some of the grave stones have fat squares of grass stacked on with fresh red dirt showing through the cracks. It reminds Ben of the way the golf greens are planted at the country club at home—little clumps of spongy grass put together like a puzzle. There are a few scraggly trees—too skinny to climb, and white ducks mob the small pond between two slopes.

Ben's family climbs out of the car, and they all start trudging up the hill to a tent-canopy on poles. The mother mutters, "Hush, now," but no one is talking. Rube's wife and children are sitting in folding chairs spread with green velvet covers, and their children stand behind them, under the tent. Ben doesn't get to stand under the tent with Tad. His mother yanks him by the shoulder to pose with her along the side. In front of Allan, Betty, Tina, and Charlie, and suspended over a deep hole, the silver coffin is parked. All the dirt that used to be in the hole is piled neatly next to it, with a rug of fake grass on top.

A bunch of men with black aprons tied on are standing, semi-circled about the grave. Two of them hold scepters, and one old, old man is shaking as he approaches the casket. Holding a book, a younger man follows him. Ben is shocked to see men in aprons, but his mouth falls open even wider as the old guy chants things about the Great One in Heaven, and the Big Sun on the Water. It sounds like verses from "Hiawatha," and the men start doing motions like the Indian sign language Ben learned in Cub Scouts. Ben looks up. The sky is still grey, and he still can huff smoke when he tries it. It looks like snow, and not sun. Then, the old man stops talking, and the young one says, "Once for the Father, Once for the Son, and Once for the Holy Ghost," and the palsied old man sprinkles flower petals on the coffin for each "once." The cousins are snickering and poking each other as the old man places a black apron on Rube's box. Ben feels his mother's warning fingers pressing into his shoulder, but he couldn't smile anyway, not even if Tad were to cross his eyes and touch his nose with his tongue.

All the people drift back to the line of cars. Ben and Mr. Edmunds hurry to their car and turn on the heat, but Ben's grandmother and mother return to mumble and touch Great-Aunt Margaret on the arm. Sharon is shaking her head and smiling with Mark. But soon they are all in the car. The father needs no directions this time, and he swiftly maneuvers the car onto the highway back to Greensboro.

They are all quiet and uneasy again—in a different way. Ben is trying hard to think of the basketball game after school tomorrow, when his team plays Columbia Laundry for the biddie tournament at the Y. But he still sees the pale head, even when he squeezes his eyes shut.

REEDIE FLOYD

TIME?

TICK TOCK TICK TOCK TICK TOCK TICK TOCK
The endless successive perfectly oriented clicks
tick tock
pierce the silence of the soul
Is it the clatter of time passing by tick tock
or— is it my life
or is it a bomb to annihilate mankind
or rather a heart beating to bring forth life
TICK TOCK TICK TOCK LIFE DEATH BEGINNING END
ETERNITY?

McGEHEE

VLADIMIR SOLOUKHIN

TRANSLATED BY LINDA GARLAND TANEY

WOLVES

We — are wolves
Compared with dogs,
there are too few of us.
The roar of double-barreled shotguns
have killed us off from year to year.

As at an execution,
we lie upon the earth without a groan.
But we survived,
yet stand outside the law.

We are wolves.
Perhaps there are too few of us.
We look like dogs,
but we did not submit.

For you — a dish of soup.
For us — starvation in a frozen field,
animal trails,
snowdrifts in the silence of the stars.

They let you in the hut.
In fierce, cold January frosts
the fateful hunger flags
surround us ever tighter.

You look out through the chinks.
We roam the woods at liberty.
You are in essence wolves,
but you betrayed your heritage.

You were grey.
You were bold in the beginning.
But they fed you.
And you were trained to guard the gate.

You were pleased to flatter,
to serve them for a crust of bread.
The collar and the chain —
Your well-earned decorations.

You shiver in your cage
when we go out to hunt.
More than any living thing
we wolves despise a dog.

MARY RODGERS QUINLAN

EULOGY FOR THE SIXTIES

BULLETIN: DALLAS.
NOVEMBER,
SIXTY-THREE:
ASK NOT WHAT YOU
CAN DO FOR YOUR COUNTRY NOW,
BUT WHAT YOUR COUNTRY WILL DO TO YOU.

MEMPHIS.
IN APRIL,
SIXTY-EIGHT:
HE HAD THIS DREAM.

SIX DAYS IN EGYPT.

SIX NIGHTS IN ISRAEL.

LOS
ANGELES.
ANOTHER JUNE:
LET US REMEMBER HIM—
AS HE WAS—
A GOOD AND DECENT MAN.

CHICAGO.
DALEY'S DISASTER.

MOSCOW'S
RELENTLESS REMINDER:

PRAGUE!

DIVIDED
WE STAND;
STONE WALLS
DO A PRISON MAKE.

WAR
BY ANY OTHER NAME?
HUE,
MY LAI?
QUANG TRI,
SAIGON OR TET?

WHAT CASUALTIES THE BODIES COUNT

WHILE MAN KEEPS DOING UNTO MAN.

GAYLE ADCOCK

J. S.

The tobacco stalks were stripped almost to the ground, and only a few late-ripening leaves were left hanging like oval pieces of yellowed parchment. There were more trucks around Jones's Gas Station and Grocery during the day now, and the farmers were beginning to remember their bad habits. They drank cheap beer all day and sang in their yards all night like howling dogs—except Cassem. He always drank wine and then sang hymns on the church steps. He didn't like the Sunday morning services, but he gave the church such a work-out during the week that nobody really tried to persuade him to come. The Negroes were feeling the change of the season too. They had just finished the picking and wouldn't be needed or liked again, until time for the hog-slaughterings. I had trouble understanding how these people lived with values that changed as the fields changed, and trips to Bahama Community left me with an uncertain feeling of nausea—but I went back to get away from the city and to learn how to run the farm from my father. Our tenants looked forward to our visits so they could memorize us from top to bottom and then drain more money out of my father before we left. He stood so firmly, listening to their counterfeit reasons for wanting it and then relinquished it without believing a word they said. J. S. was usually the one that worked himself up to asking for it. He'd be out the frayed screen door, across the dirt yard, and standing by the rotting, fungus-green well before our car had fully stopped. The minute I looked at him, nausea hit and I knew I had started turning the color of the well. He stood in a wrinkled, hanging-out T-shirt and grey work pants grinning his most charming grin. His hair was slick black like a drugstore countertop and the top halves of his teeth next to the gum matched it. Shaving only on Saturday nights, stubble pierced his sun-broiled face every day except Sunday. He just stood there waiting with his gut poked out, and I stood there trying to smile and hating his ignorance along with the odor of cheap beer. Not noticing the freakish image J. S. projected, my father walked evenly up to him and began the usual discussion of fertilizers and nematode sprays; so, freed of social obligation, I stepped aside to scan the farm. The house was unpainted frame that looked like an enlargement of the wall on nine, deformed, cinder-block legs. Ragged screens poked out unevenly at every window, as flies and wasps zipped in to grab a bite and zipped out. Dusty, organdy curtains covered the windows on the inside but they had puncture wounds too and presented no problem at all for the insects' entrances and exits. A patchwork, tin quilt covered the house—and the house behind the house. I noticed that the house behind the house had finally succumbed, but unable to die peacefully, had been propped back up with a long cedar post. The fields further on were the only things that eased the grip on my stomach. They looked warm and soft in the sun even though they too were dying; reeking of drying apples and peaches from the trees all around. The only sounds made were the crackles of stiff stalks wavering in the breeze, until the screen door on the house screeched. I predicted the unavoidable return of nausea, as a wiry miniature of J. S. jogged out and smeared an identical grin. One cheek looked bloated by the mumps, but his actions denied disease as he turned his head to unload a thick, brown stream of chewing. To keep back some equally horrible ejection from my own mouth, I blurted, "How old are you?" He turned back still grinning, "Six. I go to school this year."

"Oh, are you excited?"

"Naw."

I turned to my father. For the first time he was challenging J. S.'s need for more money so I waited.

"What did you do with the money I gave you last week?"

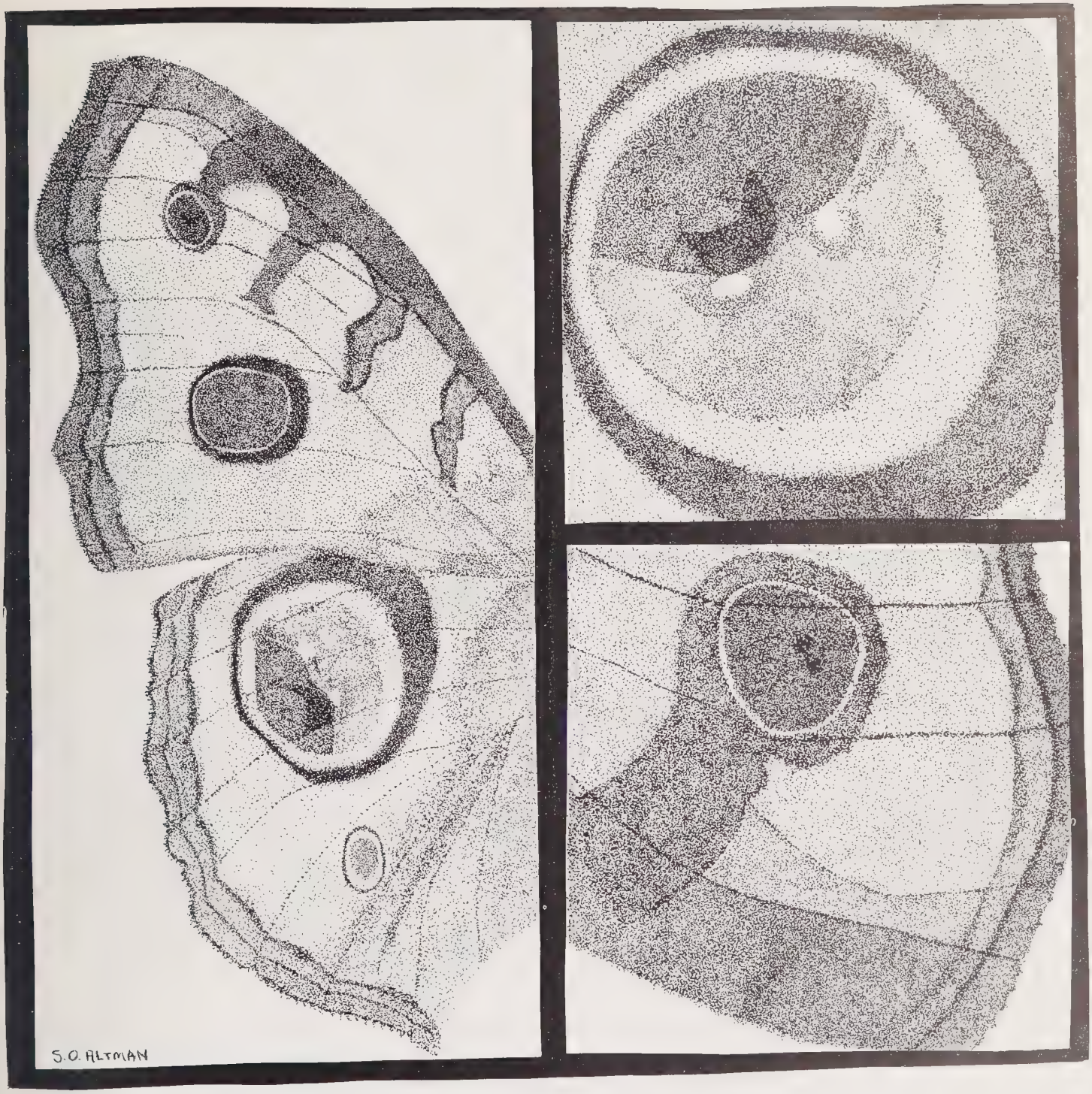
"Well, Gene, I ain't been straight and drunk it up, but the boy, Gene. His tuition is due and you know how bright he is. I got to send him back."

My father stood, listening and looking through J. S., as if he were the organdy curtains, and then handed him the money.

"How about letting me put plumbing in the house now, J. S.? It looks like you're having some trouble with your present facilities."

"Naw, it's good for a while yet. We don't want to mess up the inside of the house with tearing out an' all and we like a little exercise."

We turned without more discussion and started back for the city as J. S. and his small replica started back to the house.


S.O. ALTMAN

GAYLE ADCOCK

THE BUCK

I pulled off onto the shoulder of the road so the line of cars coming toward me could cross the one-lane bridge across Lake Mickie. Most of the farmers went to town on Saturday and it was like waiting for a funeral procession to get across the bridge if you were one of the few coming from town. Even the faces of the children in the cars were strained, because this trip they would probably get only jeans, raincoats, notebooks, and pencils. Bahama Elementary and Little River High Schools opened next Monday since the last of the tobacco had been marketed and there was no excuse not to go back. The fields along the lake had already been disced under and lay as if still-born until the next spring plowing. Even the lake had drawn itself in to keep warm for the winter, exposing snaggy banks and rusty cans left by summer fishermen. All the cars had passed and, feeling as suddenly left alone as one of the fields, I turned on the radio and pulled back on the road to cross the bridge. It was so narrow I couldn't look away while crossing but once I had made it I looked to the left to see if Pat Ellis's goat was out in his usual place. He was, standing right by the rock, just as if he knew he was Bahama Community's national monument. He was the one being in Bahama nobody overlooked because he was divided right around his middle into two sections—the front one black, the hind one white. Pat even named him George Wallace so he could get in all the racial issue discussions at Jones' Store and just by being the owner of this old goat his prestige had grown in the community and his opinions were taken more seriously now. To an outsider they were just comic figures, but unaware of the humor, George kept his position by the rock to welcome everybody to the community.

I rode on down the narrow road, sharp curve after sharp curve, the car swaying easily with rock music from the city station and the sun through the windshield warming my face and shoulders. The road was empty and the fields along with it stripped bare except for speckled tick-hounds let out to run off weight before hunting season. I almost passed Jones' Store and wished I hadn't swerved in automatically as I got out of the car to go in. I couldn't pull out now because they knew the car and would tell my father I was a snob next time he came and how I was always in a daze and stared at them like I wasn't really listening when they talked. So I stood in the settling dust for a minute and finally crackled across bottle caps into the store. No one was in the front and instead of the usual odors of clammy sweat and stinging overall dye, the smell of fresh blood like a grocery store meat counter filled the small room. Sarah stepped out and motioned for me to come on through with a dripping hand.

"Wait'll you see the one we got this time. Purtiest one so far."

"Okay. In a minute, Sarah."

There was a puddle of retired, tick-hound flesh on the floor I had to see first. I walked over and sat down cross-legged in front of him. Big Jigs and I had grown up together so he didn't feel obligated to stand; just rolled those Jesus eyes up at me. I bowed my head until I felt the velvety limpness of his jaws against my cheek and then blew softly into his ear. His head raised only slightly as a tongue rolled out and lapped around my ear in reply.

"Wish me luck, Big Jigs. This is going to be like learning to carry birds in your mouth."

I tried to rub his neck as I spoke but the too loose flesh slid back and forth under my hand, so I kissed him on the forehead just above his saggy eyes and started towards the stale slaughtering smells.

Sarah was standing by the door covered from neck to knees like a surgeon. A buck's huge head was bobbing off the end of a kitchen table, his hide all rolled up around his neck leaving naked flesh and one long incision down his stomach open, as a line of men helped themselves. The first in line would scoop up some insides and pass them to the next until they travelled from the table to an oil barrel just outside the back door. They spoke as I walked in and kept the line of organs

moving, along with their mouths, while I sat and watched. J. S., our tenant farmer, was in the line. He looked natural with blood smeared all over him and his hands dripping with it. Even his forehead was marked with a dried crust of blood where he had pushed back the slick, black hair that dangled down too far sometimes. He looked up pleased and began talking to me as the others continued joking among themselves, "Good a meat as you ever eat, this one will be. Shot down in my field, too."

His shoulders kept rhythmically shifting, like those of the tick hound working the fields for scents, as he talked and passed on the waste parts of the deer.

"Plenty for y'all too since it's your land. I'll give your Daddy some next time he comes."

I didn't answer because my throat was clenched and I was trying to decide why he looked so pleased with himself—probably because I looked sick and he knew I was fighting to keep from running out back and dropping my head like the buck's they were working on. I watched the head jerk up several more times, as they plunged their hands down, before I remembered why I had come.

"J. S., Daddy says he wants you to get those boards up from the house he torn down and cut it up for firewood for your mother-in-law. She said she'd like to have it and she can't get it herself."

"Well, one of the boys can do it. I ain't got time this week."

I started to answer him with something sharp about having a beer consumption quota to meet, but Sarah came in with apple cider for everybody and I let it drop. The cider smelled sweet and looked foggy, not like the pure grocery store brands, so I held the paper cup and just looked into it trying to think what it reminded me of; but I couldn't drink yet. The buck was still right in front of me and J. S. with the others smeared their red fingers around their cups and began to drink. Then as the smell of cider began to replace the smell of the slaughtering in my head and I looked at J. S., I remembered.

One day last year in the early fall J. S. had been sure his home-made cider was ready to be tried so he'd made Daddy and me follow him to the barn where he kept his barrel. He had strutted like the guinea hens in the yard all the way and then had to be the first to see if it was okay. The hay had just been put in the barn for winter and gave the feeling of spring with its warm smell, laced with the scents of ripened apples and sharp sage leaves laid out to dry on papers inside. The animals hadn't been brought in yet so the barn was not filled with the usual thick, moist air from manured stalls. J. S. sipped and waited for it to hit but something was not quite good enough.

"Ain't stirred 'nough. Tastes a little weak somehow." He reached for a piece of moulding he used to stir and stabbed down to the bottom pulp to bring up more flavor. Instead of flavor, a slick, inflated cat rolled up and bounced up and down on the surface in J. S.'s face. He had tried to smile but had had to slap his hand over his mouth and stride out back. As I remembered the sharp pain from pulling all the muscles in my sides laughing, I turned up the cider I had in my hand and looked up through J. S. He didn't seem quite so pleased not that I could drink it and my color was back.

"Remember to get the wood up for your mother-in-law, J. S. The boys'll be in school."

LINDA HUDSON

TWO POEMS

In my mind one mountain erupts,
One horn blasts,
One crystal shatters.
Whirling, clanging, splintering rainbow;
An electrical sun flashing,
And our hearts collide.

The old people stagger about the woods
Occasionally crouching to pick up
    an acorn.
Always looking down,
They stoop to meet the seeded earth.
    How long will it last?

MALINDA

TED WEIANT

PALMISTRY

I must have lost some music
scored for me
in all these folds and creases
that interrupt the lining
of my empty fist,
in all these grooves
that scar my open hand.

Psalmist — Palmist!
Read the shambles of my curve.
What chords have strangled it?
What secants intersected it?

The line's been cut.
The bended shapes are tangled.
On its side, a model train of thought,
derailed, — runs down
beside the glittered sections of a track.
You hold the broken record's wreckage.
Nineteen rpms too fast.

Palmist — Psalmist!
Play the shambles of my curve.
How join the circle that was there?
How mine the LoFi tones that sleep like crystal
in a fault?

If shards recall the cup,
the arcs may recollect your song.

PAT TOVEY

CAN'T WE BE FRIENDS ANYMORE?

You closed in on me.
I wasn't looking for a lover.
I wanted more:
One I could talk easily with,
confide with,
act stupid with,
run with,
play with,
lose my cares with.

You had my heart
but in a special way
not a lover's way.

"All friends no lovers,"
much better though than
"All lovers no friends"
Lovers are no special breed.
Many search so hard for love
that where it's believed to be,
it's not.

Friendship is a form of love.
It encompasses more understanding,
and more realization of what that friend is
as a person.
It was good for both of us,
it was very good for me.
Friends are so hard to find.
Love oftimes comes quickly;
before the knowing,
before the learning,
without the consideration.

"I'm just a friend."
Don't feel placed lowly,
you will under-cut something
I value highly.
There are times
when everyone needs someone
special
I love you;
In a truly special way.

BOBBIE CALHOUN

THE BAR

OFF . . . ON . . . OFF . . . ON . . .
Illuminated beer advertisement
Singing its product's praises
In a glorious blaze,
Echoing with questionable darkness
The beer
?
That made
?
A city
?
Famous
?

Farmers,
awed, trying to look bored,
hoping no one will notice, praying someone will,
only two apiece of that famous beer . . . lifetime budget.

The Students,
bored, trying to look bored,
paragons of knowledge, Gods of the Farmers,
a sizeable dent in a more famous beer, the sky's the limit . . .

A town pick-up,
bestowing kisses on her seven pin-ball dates,
oblivious to Farmers, Students, She needs neither.

Susan,
watching a conversational tennis match,
serve . . . return
football . . . football
track . . . track
beer . . . beer
burp . . . fault

It's Happy Hour; that's why we came.

groover

VLADIMIR SOLOUKHIN

TRANSLATED BY LINDA GARLAND TANEY

HOW TO DRINK THE SUN

Ignoramuses—
before they eat a pomegranate,
they cut it with a knife.
The juice of pomegranate flows
along the blade
onto the plate—
a scarlet puddle.

But we know how to cherish
pomegranate juice.
This fruit,
so like the Sun,
huge,
all enclosed within its yellow rind
turns slowly in your palms.
From every side you check
for broken places in the surface.
Already —
through the skin your fingers hear the seeds inside,
large and tender.
You press them — lightly . . .
(Carmine haze!)
Three grains are spurting blood!
(Close quarters there for splashings—
a moist and hollow cracking)
Now carefully we knead and knead
the rows and rows of berry-seeds.
Jet-streams jostle one-another.
They move about —

a flood beneath the skin.
Elastic now,
the hard grenade has softened.
More sensitive, more tender now
than palms of hands.
But watch the pomegranate doesn't burst!
It often happens with these things.
Tender love and care is all that counts.
You've done the upper tier of seeds?
That's nothing!
You've got to learn to reach down deep,
to soften up the center thoroughly . . .
. . . Now,
Bite the skin,
throw back your head,
lift the precious berry to the sky
and gulp it down!

SARAH McNAMEE

PETEY AND IKE

I am sure that there would never have been any trouble had Henry and Pete not been born on the same day. But they were, and, as a result, Aunt Carrie and Mama spent the remainder of their lives constantly comparing the behavior patterns of their respective sons. Through the years it developed into a bitter, competitive thing and tempers flared often.

Henry was my brother and one of ten children. Pete was an only child. Mama and Aunt Carrie were sisters, but they were as different as night and day. Aunt Carrie was a small, hawk-nosed woman with beady eyes which looked piercingly at you over the rim of spectacles precariously perched on the end of her nose. She was soft-spoken—at times her voice was barely audible —but she had an "acid" tongue and her words were most always caustic and critical.

In contrast, Mama was a large-boned woman with an angular frame which suggested great physical strength. Her voice was loud, almost raucous at times. She was very direct, outspoken and, sometimes, too frank. She called Aunt Carrie two or three times a day on the telephone (or Aunt Carrie would call her) to compare notes on Henry and Pete. Daddy once said he couldn't understand why Mama used a telephone when all she had to do was to stick her head out the window —"That voice," he said, "could be heard five miles away!"

Anyway, Aunt Carrie never tired of reciting Pete's (Petey's, as she affectionately called him) latest brilliant achievements for that particular day. Everything he did, every move he made was unique and, as far as Aunt Carrie was concerned, had never been and never could be duplicated. After she had expounded at great length about "Petey", she would ask rather casually about Henry—not because she was interested, but out of sheer curiosity. Then Mama, not to be outdone, would relate in glowing terms, the wonderful things that Henry had done that day. It became a contest, each trying to outdo the other, where the two boys were concerned.

As the years passed, Henry grew tall in stature with fine broad shoulders—very muscular in appearance. This is often the case when a boy is one of ten children and has to "fight" for his share of the victuals. One tends to want to eat more when there is a scarcity of food. And so he grew big. He was a star on the football team and active in all sports. He was a pool shark and could beat any boy in town at ping-pong. He was the idol of the small "punks" and highly respected by youths his own age. His name often appeared on the sports page of the local newspaper with captions such as "Thompson Triumphs for Hounds Again" or "Thompson Leads Hounds to Victory"—articles which told in glowing language of his illustrious plays which led the team to victory. In every respect, Henry was an all-round athlete and a healthy portrait of fine young manhood.

On the other hand, "Petey" had not developed in such fine fashion. Being an only child, Aunt Carrie had lavished all of her affection in his direction. She coddled him and over-protected him to the point of being ridiculous. She was solicitious of his every whim. She spoon-fed him until he was eight years old. The result was that "Petey" hated the food and hated the spoon, and hated the hand that held the spoon and, as a consequence, he would not eat and did not grow properly. He was small and frail and sickly looking. His face was very pale and, even in bitter, cold weather, small beads of perspiration stood out in little clusters on his forehead and above his lips. His hands were very effeminate in appearance with long tapered fingers which were smooth and ususued looking—mainly because they had never been used. Aunt Carrie did everything for him. He did not have to chop wood, or milk the cow, or gather eggs, or feed the hogs. These chores were too menial for "Petey". Aunt Carrie could

not bear for him to get his hands dirty or his clothing mussed. She kept him immaculately dressed at all times —even starched the blue jeans he wore to school. Mama derided Aunt Carrie about this, telling her that she was making a "sissy" out of him to which Aunt Carrie retorted that at least he looked *clean*. This barbed remark was made in reference to the fact that Henry sometimes wore the same outfit three or four days in a row because Mama could not keep up with all the washing and ironing which goes along with a big family. Aunt Carrie was sort of "getting even" with Mama. Actually, she was insanely jealous of the fact that Henry was so obviously much more manly than "Petey" and ever so much more admired.

In May 1941, Henry and "Petey" graduated from Highlands High School. Henry was Salutatorian of the class and "Petey" was voted "Best Dressed" in the class of fourteen students. Mama and Aunt Carrie sat together at the Exercises and cried a little. "Petey" mopped perspiration from his forehead and lips and scratched his left ear at intervals, throughout the entire event. Amy Still, the Valedictorian, got the hiccups during her speech, and the Program ended rather abruptly when she became hysterical and was unable to continue.

Neither "Petey" nor Henry went to college that fall. In the first place, nobody had any money and, in the second place, neither of the boys had any inclination or desire to go. So, while they were sitting around on their royal rear ends, the "Japs" bombed Pearl Harbor and World War II was born.

In the mountains of North Carolina in those years it was not like it is now. Then it was not just a duty to serve one's country, it was an honor, and to be accepted into the Armed Forces was a privilege instead of a punishment. Thus it was that "Petey" and Henry were among the first to go and sign up for duty.

They left amidst floods of tears and sad good-byes. Mama and Aunt Carrie were in unison for the first time since the boys were born. They clung to each other and wept as the bus pulled away from the curb in front of Bill's Soda Shop which also served as the Bus Depot. Henry and "Petey" reported to Fort McClellan for their physical examinations. "Petey" was examined first and passed with "flying colors" and was immediately dispatched to Fort Jackson for basic training.

When Henry went for his physical, the examining physician found that his hearing was faulty due to a bursted eardrum and he was classified 4F. Henry came home in disgrace. Mama acted as though she had reared an abnormal child and went into seclusion for three weeks after his rejection. Henry got drunk the first night home and vomited all over the parlor carpet. Aunt Carrie was merciful to Mama in that she did not call for several days after hearing the bad news. She was nicer to Mama than she had ever been because, at long last, *she* was the victor. Mama was very cold to her on the telephone, but Aunt Carrie appeared not to notice the change in her attitude and continued calling two or three times a day. She gave Mama blow-by-blow descriptions of "Petey's" magnificent adventures. "Petey" was transferred to Fort Benning—"Petey" was now at Fort Bragg—"Petey" had been sent to Fort Still—"Petey" was seeing the U.S.A. and learning all sorts of valuable things. "Petey" was studying to be a mechanic! (Frankly, in my wildest imagination I could not visualize "Petey" with grease on his hands, and where he would find strength to pick up a wrench or a screwdriver was beyond me!)

After Aunt Carrie's calls Mama would "sull up" and press her lips together in a firm, straight line and mutter something like, "She makes me sick," or "I take everything Aunt Carrie says with a grain of salt."

The final blow came, though, when Aunt Carrie called to tell Mama that "Petey" had been sent overseas! To Mama, overseas meant the "unknown"; and for her, the "unknown" held an aura of excitement and fascination which absolutely overpowered her. It would have been the culmination of all Mama's dreams to have had a son sent *Overseas!* How she would have loved getting letters with those odd-looking foreign stamps on them and reading the letters which told of the mystery and wonder and beauty of those far away places that she would never see.

Aunt Carrie really "spread it on thick" about "Petey's" experiences overseas. She delighted in telling that "Petey" was now in France, now in Germany, etc., etc., and reveled in Mama's obvious envy. Mama did not tell her to stop calling, though, because she was too curious. She *had* to know what was going on overseas.

Aunt Carrie gloatingly told Mama that "Petey" was in Eisenhower's outfit in Europe. Eisenhower, of course, was Supreme Commander in charge of all British and American Armies in Europe; but the way Aunt Carrie put it, it sounded as though "Petey" and "Ike" were marching as partners, equipped with guns and bayonets, over hill and dale, and through the sniper-ridden forests. She said over and over to Mama, "Well Helen, guess where "Petey" and "Ike" are today?" This galled Mama to no end, for while she could swallow the fact that "Petey" was somewhere under Eisenhower's command, she was not stupid enough to believe that he and "Petey" had become "buddies" in the foxhole.

"Petey" was overseas for three years. He came home without a scratch. He also came home without any medals, crosses, ribbons, or stripes, except for that one little stripe—that inverted V which tells the world that you are a Buck Private.

PAUL BAKER NEWMAN

CHRIST CHURCH PARK

There is the bitter triumph only,
nor should we stop for that, for bitterness,
nor should we cease, relinquish or give in.
It is the triumph of the mind, and reaches
audible at distances, beyond
all airs, to infinite techniques of silence.

It is the roses white in the soft air,
the geraniums burning intense and cool,
a pepper-red against the mint-green grass;
it is the laughter rising slowly in the wind
that tells that this is England, caught up
within the past, and fighting that admission.

The wind through the cottonwoods and lindens
in Christ Church Park blows a mere twenty years
in half a cool soft gust and five again
in just a leaf-twitch, sun through the soft white dust
afloat in the flicker and the dapple of the shadows.
What lies can save us from these histories?

**I wrote this in Oxford in 1967, remembering my first visit to England during the War, in 1942.*

Paul Baker Newman

Signed

LINDA HUDSON

THREE POEMS

Roll me on your shell-studded floors.
I sense your pounding deep inside me.
It throbs in our tumulting.
Your foaming currents carry me
Down; swirling, tumbling.
Froth and more froth blankets me.
Cool water's cadence captures me.
Why did you wait so long, Great Friend?
I wish your pulse had met mine long ago.
My arms clench your currents.
In your great torrent
I thrust my trembling body.
Each crushing breaker sends me deeper.
You draw my small breath out and out.
Scraping your depth, I am released.

Jesus, it's beautiful,
In this life I sit complacently,
It is BEAUTIFUL!
LIFE. In me.
Rustling leaves, splashing puddles MINE,
Open windows, swinging doors
Shoot me out, boost me up.
But something's ticking.
In every house a clock
Every damn one ticking ticking ticking.
One day I was small.
A robin lay dead under our hedge.
"Its soul went to heaven"
    said my grandmother.
She wrinkled her face
    "Throw it in the garbage."
A ripple in the lake
    I'd tossed a pebble.
The circle gets bigger
    then it's gone.
Jesus, it's *still* beautiful.
    My life!
Full like a lake
But my heart is beating beating beating.

M. A. S. H.

"Don't drive so fast."
"Yes, mother."
The highway neon lights blazed. A passing bank sign flashed 92°. Headlights whizzed by unheard. The windows were up. The air-conditioning was on.
"Are you cold?"
"Yes, mother."
"Then cut off the air-conditioner."
"No, you'll be too warm then."
"Don't be silly, I'll take off my sweater."
"Then you'll be too cold."
"Not if you cut off the air-conditioning."
"I'm not really cold. I'll just leave it on."
A pulsing neon hamburger drew occasional cars off the road. Most of the traffic pushed on through the green light.
"Slow down."
"The speed limit is thirty-five. I'm doing thirty-nine."
"That's too fast."
"Yes, mother."
"Just because I say slow down doesn't mean you have to drive ten miles per hour."
"Yes, mother."
They watched the full August moon in its competition with the flamboyant road signs for ice cream, plumping supplies, and patio furniture.
"That was an awful movie."
"I'm sorry I took you to see it."
"You say it's supposed to be funny?"
"Mother, it's black comedy. It's a sort of artistic method. It's comedy on the surface but underneath it's deadly serious."
"Classifying it as an art form doesn't clean it up any. I couldn't help feeling it was downright degrading."
"Yes, mother."
"All that sex. Imagine that poor woman trying to bring some refinement into that dreadful M.A.S.H. Army unit, and all she receives is ridicule and degradation."
"You may have missed the point, mother."
The mother turned her head to read a drive-in movie marquee reading, 'Adults only—The Erotic Housewife and Alimony Lover.'
"To think they had to audacity to do those degrading things. And to further victimize her by calling her Hot Lips. I feel awful."
A traffic light flashed red. The car stopped abruptly.
"Mother, it seems to me that under her mask of propriety she was as basely human as anyone, if not more so. Don't fret, she wasn't even the main character."
The light switched to green, and they moved along.
"Well, for me she was."

KATHY FETTER

APPALACHIA

Rain splashes coldly
Through the shivering pines, chilling
The lean, mountain wind
And etching new gullies in
The pallid, moonlit soil.

An urgent, searching
Emptiness winds through the rain—
Washed shadows, following
The lonely swish of dead pine
Needles blown by the heedless wind.

The pines rustle and
Snap incoherently before
The wind; the rain rushes
Through barren ravines - - - silent,
Futile echoes of emptiness.

Down the mountain a
Dog howls forlornly; the sound
Drifts aimlessly through
The night in the hollow of
The cold, desolate wind.

SEGAR GRAVATT

POEM

Have you ever wondered about the mountains,
or the waves—
the way they all seem to be one at night.
Or why Snoopy is such a wise beagle,
and why Lucy always pulls the football away from Charlie Brown.
Or why friendship can be great
and yet, a traumatic experience sometimes.
Or how come there are grades, or bad blind dates, or rules,
or why some people dream at night and some don't.
Or why everybody likes the funny paper, especially on Sunday
cause it's in color instead of the usual black and white.
Have you ever wondered why there are lonely people,
or God.
Or why there is snow, or storms, or blue on green days.
Or that M&M's do melt in your hands,
or Winnie the Pooh and Mickey Mouse.

If you ever think about these things,
then maybe someday out of the corner of your mind
you'll think about me.

REEDIE FLOYD

IMAGES

The body knows what the mind doth not
The body: it sees and feels.
But the mind: it makes images
That only one person can see.

JULIE FERRILL

THE APOSTLE'S CREED

Colin Flattery loved the earth and knew the natural elements about as well as anyone. And so when she walked out of the house and smelled the air and tasted the dampness and felt the ominous stillness, she knew it would rain soon and was glad of it too. It had been so insufferably hot for April. In fact, she had never been anywhere that was as hot and uncomfortable as this place. The early and unexpected heat had made her sick; her body failed to make a proper transition and now the blue haired bug-eyed smelly old nurse made her take Geritol for god's sake like she was an old woman with tired blood; tired blood—well now that she thought about it she could sort of feel her red and white corpuscles yawning and stretching, yes, and maybe half of them were dozing while the other half struggled against sleepiness to accept some degree of responsibility. Poor, poor corpuscles, she thought, we'll rest, corpuscles. I'm so awfully tired and this will give you, white corp, a chance to meet you, red corp. Yes, yes, let's get ourselves together here.

She sat on the hard and ugly cement bench and decided to wait for the rain. It wouldn't be long now, she could just rest here for a moment until it began. No, it won't be long now, thought Colin, as she looked over her unnatural horizon that was obstructed by a massive irregular brick building. She saw the sky distinctly separated into bold planes of black and white. But still the sun was beating hard on her head, penetrating from all sides with rhythmic throbs until the weight of her head seemed unbearable and her neck was not able to support the heaviness. She laid down and shut her eyes thinking she had missed frying her brain, only now her brain felt scrambled and her head was dizzy; she liked it. She liked lying there for the sake of her corpuscles and herself. She liked having nothing to do and nobody to talk to. She felt perhaps she was just about the most important person in the world. She opened one eye—ah, the sky was practically all black now. She liked watching the sinister color sneak across the sky, obliterating everything pure that got in its way. She loved black. Her father had given her a black horse named Sooty. Her father had black hair.

When she was little on Saturday afternoons her father and she would play barber shop. He sat in the den's biggest chair and shouted, Colin, Colin it's time for Figaro, Colin. And she'd run into the bathroom and run out again on chunky five year old legs that never tired, with a big black Ace comb. And she'd run run run down the narrow hall and up the stairs to Daddy's den and she'd hear Shu la rue la rue la Shu la rue la rue Shu la rue la rue la it's an Irish lullaby, or By yon bonnie banks and by yon bonnie braes where the sun shines bright on Loch Lomond . . . in a voice so thick and husky that she shivered with excitement knowing the time was no near. And she'd silently start massaging his temples with childish dimpled fingers that were surprisingly strong for their inexperience. Round and round, slowly like the hands of a clock she'd gently push the blue-white skin that she knew was so soft and tender until his eyes closed and he'd soulfully sigh Colin, Colin my little darling, you'll be married too young and I can only hope he's a fine man. Tell a story Daddy, tell a story Daddy. He would, too, carefully choosing his words while she loved him the whole time by running the big black comb through his shinning hair with strokes that started from the hairline on his forehead and dearly traveled all the way down to the unkept hair on the back of his thick neck.

Colin sighed, exhausted with the recall. She didn't often remember people (most of her people had been so unimportant) and sometimes she scarcely remembered herself. She opened her eyes and looked up through thick bunches of green leaves that seemed so near to her and she stretched her hands grasping toward them, flexing her fingers arching her back and bending her knees as she did so. Through the green bunches the sky looked even darker than before and was tinged with a sickening shade of green. She looked about her and found that in the short time of her reverie the day had

turned to unnatural twilight. It would rain anytime now. Through the strange new-settled darkness she saw a dog coming towards her, leaping and bounding gracefully in recognition of her. She sat up quickly and for an instant felt dizzy and afraid. Her corpuscles had been at rest, she remembered, and she had disturbed them suddenly without giving them time to grumble and whine and lazily take their places once again. She smiled at the absurdity of her corpuscle concern and instantaneously tucked a reminder somewhere in the crevices of her brain that she would take the topic up once more later.

She met the dog delightedly and the setter sat obediently thumping his tail and bowing his front legs as he always did. Colin sat in front of him as close as she was able with her legs extending on either side of him housing him like a dear old friend, comfortably and naturally. "Godrest, Godrest. How are you little man?" She stroked his tufted black and white coat and buried her face in his neck, pleasantly inhaling the dog smell and listening to his loud short rhythmic breathing, knowing the whole time that he would be here any second, that he was right behind Godrest. She could see him without even looking at him. He was coming toward her and the dog looking questioning and intense as always, either as if he was glad to see her or as if something disastrous was about to happen. He smiled the same confusing smile in either case, and it was damnable and irritating. He was consuming her, perhaps even destroying her; eating her up with his omnipotence. But she always smiled the same genuine smile at him. She always felt warm and was ever so glad to see him even though she knew he was evil, demonic maybe even diabolically minded. She knew all that but also knew how he felt how he moved, how sensitive his eyes could be. She knew all that and she knew that he did not love her and so she never completely trusted him, never completely succumbed to him, never really believed in him.

He stood tall, directly over her. He looked very uniform, very perfect; almost like a robot imitation. She motioned for him to sit beside her. She couldn't stand looking so far up at him, she couldn't see his eyes. All she could see was mounds of black hair and she remembered her father again, stroking his hair, massaging his temples, loving him childishly. He squatted beside her. She wanted to touch him and tell him she was happy that he had come but instead she watched her hands alternately move from Godrest's head down to the start of his tail. She looked for an instant into Godrest's soft dog-brown eyes and saw contentment, appreciation and something she imagined to be love. It was raining when Colin looked at him for the first time. He was staring at her and the eyes that she had always known to be so sensually deep deep brown were tinged with yellow now, lifeless and loveless, devoid of emotion. She was suddenly afraid of him, and she jumped up and opened her mouth wide as if to say something. She only mumbled about the rain and they moved inside.

When he left, she watched him go. He and Godrest left without a single look behind at her. He was taking Godrest and not coming back again ever this time. She was furious at Godrest's lack of concern. She was furious that he was taking Godrest who she felt was as much hers as his. She was furious and so she walked to the big oak tree and kicked it hard, wanting to hurt it, wanting to hurt something, so she wouldn't be so all alone. She was furious because she felt victimized; he had undermined her worth, debased her and defiled her. She hated him. And the more she hated him the more her gut ached. It ached and ached and began to take hold and ravage all of her insides until at last the throbbing aching subsided and located itself in her stomach and throat. She felt sick and wanted to cry. She was walking aimlessly through uncut grass, drenched from the rain that had almost stopped. There was no where for her to go so she stopped and stood very still looking down at the grass. She felt a surge of overwhelming power that involuntarily contracted her stomach and throat simultaneously. And simultaneously she put one hand to her head so that her fingers covered her eyes and the other hand clutched her stomach. She would cry. She did cry and while she was crying her muscles began to stretch out and her nerves relaxed their tight grip so she was able to wander. Her head was drifting as she cried and her body began to unwind and expand until she lay prostrate in the grass.

When she dove into the water she stayed close to the bottom for as long as she was able. Her weightlessness comforted her and the shrill silence of being underwater weighed heavily on her. The gentle undulations rocked her and she felt cradled and a natural part of the water. Her mind and body felt free and for an instant she thought she would like to say for a long time but then she burst through the water gasping for air. She would have a self-conducted ceremony for the occasion and then she would never remember the events of this day again. So she floated on her back, extended her arms out into the water and locked her feet together. Her head was tilted back so that the water covered her ears and for a moment she shut her eyes and listened to the sounds of the underwater. Her voice sounded distorted and strangely amplified and as she heard the lazy dreamy words she wondered who was speaking them:

"I believe in nothing . . . that Nothing made the heaven and the earth . . . that Nothing is created equal and Nothing is sacred. I believe that Nothing is the father of mankind. . ."

Colin listened but did not like the sound of the words. She submerged herself again quickly, then climbed slowly out of the water. "I believe in myself!" she shouted into the echoing pool.

RETTA D'ALBORA

APRIL 23, 1970

it seemed everyone
was going somewhere:
destination and determination
on their faces.
i had been
nowhere and was going
nowhere. i was merely
out to enjoy
the day i'd
missed.

DEB WILLIAMS

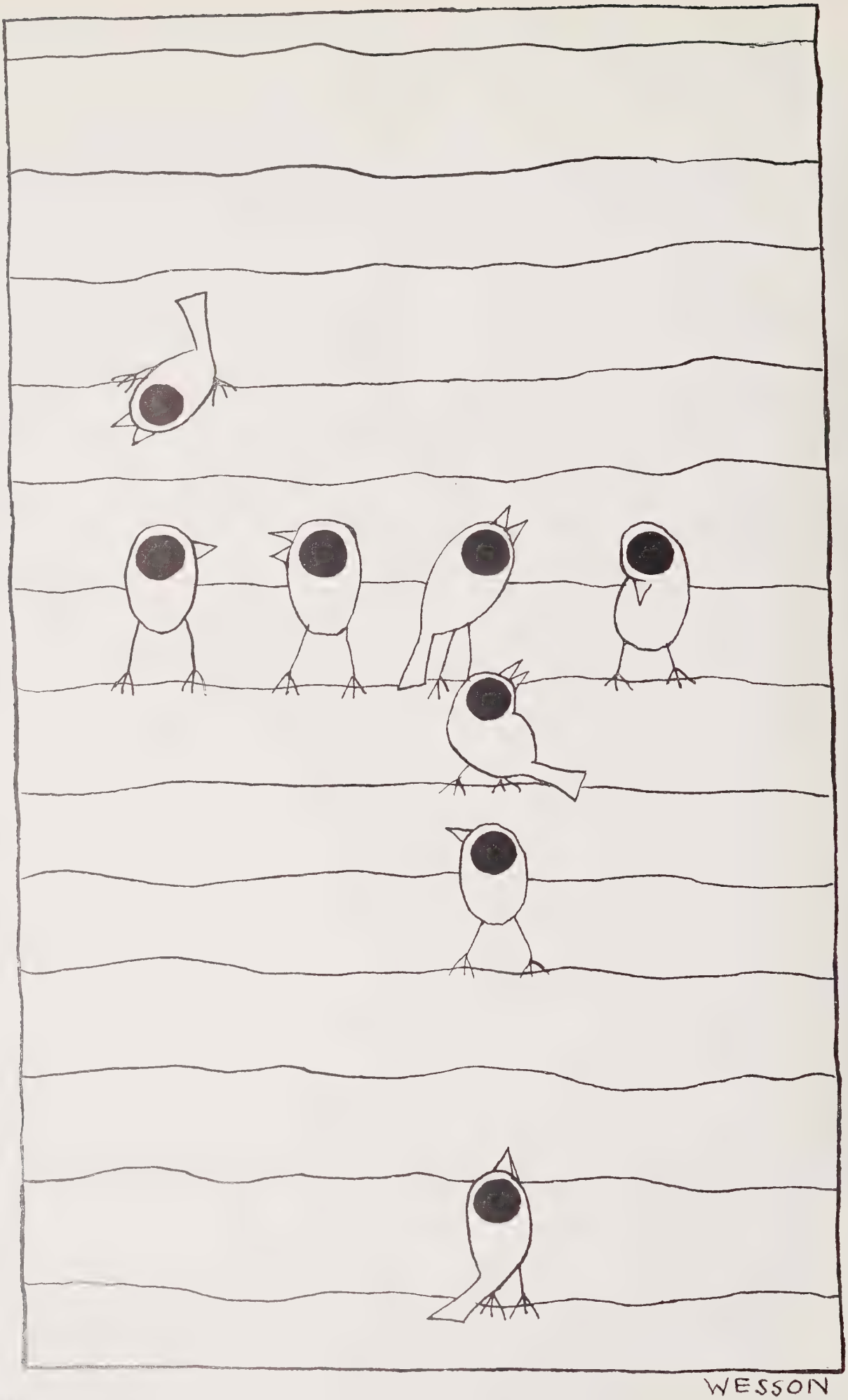
POEM

Oh wow
i mean it was too much
just outta sight
seein you
and lovin you
and watchin
that crazy wind do such
really groovy things to
your long long hair.
iloveyou just really freaky
ya know?
really fine
just
very spacy and
very
very
warm.
you.

SEGAR GRAVATT

POEM

The pain slowly creeps into the soul . . .
anguish streams through cells, nerves, pores
until the scream is in the throat.
Muscles are throbbing;
the neck is bulging;
aching to let it free
but,
can the heart be shown quite so easily?


WESSON

LINDA HUDSON

THAT'S MY GIRL

Sunday afternoons belonged to my father and me. Since I can remember, we have kept that time for ourselves by unspoken law. Sometimes I wonder if we didn't spend those Sundays growing up together.

As a child of three and four, I recall sitting on the back steps singing "Pussywillow" and "Baby Bumblebee." I'd teach the words to every nursery school song, and he would hum along while I piped the squeaking soprano at the top of my little lungs. We'd drink his beer and eat vast quantities of cheddar. When I felt brave, I'd even nibble at his smoked herring.

We had a conspiracy against my mother. She hates beer and smelly fish, but I gained a great deal from those Sunday afternoons that mamas cannot teach little girls. Who else but my father gave me root beer barrels. Or patiently endured the weeks it took me to learn to whistle or to ride a two wheeler?

He seemed to know more poems than anyone. I thought "The Cremation of Sam McGhee" and "The Face on the Barroom Floor" much more interesting than the Sunday school lessons I'd had that morning. We learned "The Owl and the Pussycat" and recited it as often as I wished. Sitting there—addressing the backyard and quickly returning to our beer and cheese after visualizing the wedding feast which "they ate with a runcible spoon."

When I was older we moved. No more back steps. But still Sunday afternoons belonged to my father and me. He drank Scotch and I gave up beer for fruit juice. I listened to the "Rubiyat" and managed to master the line he could never quite get right, although it was his favorite line. When he came to that part I interjected the quartrain about "I think there never bloom'd so red, the rose? As where some buried Caesar bled," and he'd go on.

We got the Sunday *N. Y. Times*. I always knelt on the floor beside him in his old arm chair. We spent the afternoon on the crossword puzzle. As I was taking Spanish, I tried to help with the Spanish words. Sitting there in our sock feet, tapping them to Ravel's "Bolero," we practiced rolling the Spanish r's out loud. Our favorite was "ferrocarril." My father could never understand that "el" and "estupido" were not one word. It didn't matter. Mama didn't know what it meant, and that's what we always called her when we asked for and word, and she got it wrong.

Finishing the crossword puzzle was a major triumph. What matter if the living room floor was strewn with the unabridged dictionary, the thesaurus, the atlas and two or three volumes of the encyclopedia?

If we finished before dinner, we began Mrs. Kingsley's "Double Crosstic" in the back page of the *Saturday Review*. When I got an answer, he always said, "That's my girl."

Now, when I'm home, the Sunday *N. Y. Times*' crossword is still near sacred. I pop open a beer, drop some Tchaikovsky on the stereo and kneel by the new armchair. I'm disappointed when he doesn't get an easy one. I point the answer out to him. He says, "That's my girl," and writes it in.

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